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ABSTRACT

An associate degree program, designed to train displaced homemakers as paraprofessional counselors, is described, including the on-the-job training experiences and the academic courses. An example of the general curriculum is included, along with an evaluation questionnaire to determine program appropriateness. Evaluation results are discussed in terms of the nontraditional students' ability to: (1) understand influential factors in their lives; (2) recognize the unique aspects of the feminine experience which make women more likely to be better counselors than men for other women; (3) increase their economic status; and (4) enhance their self-esteem. (JAC)

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A College Curriculum for Displaced Homemakers: Women's Crisis Counseling

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The contemporary women's movement emerged during the 1960s in response to the increasing awareness of changes in women's roles within an industrial society. It became obvious that the limited demands of earlier suffragettes for the right to vote did not address itself to the need for economic self-sufficiency and self-determination. Without such economic power, control of resources and options in life are severely limited. Nowhere is the problem more acute than for those women who are unexpectedly facing actual loss of traditional "homemaking" roles. Changing family structures, expectations and aspirations have left these women in the middle of a dilemma that includes the need to deal with job-seeking, the development of marketable skills and direct re-entry into the broader occupational community. The twin problems of ageism and sexism are evidenced by the economic plight of "displaced homemakers". While individual counseling may greatly help women to realize that society's neglect rather than any individual failure is most responsible for her status, it seems clear that community barriers can best be overcome by educating the woman for relatively quick entry into a job market related to and utilizing the very real capabilities, capacities and life experiences that she previously "volunteered" as part of her home-making role.

While the centers for displaced homemakers that have mush-roomed in recent years are essential as resource and psychological support centers, academic curricula designed specifically for the displaced homemaker are rare. Such a curriculum, with relevant

and available career opportunities guaranteed at its completion, has the clearcut goal of enhancing women's self-esteem, not via consciousness-raising groups but through the economic power and status that such a "career" would guarantee.

We have designed an associate degree program which would enable displaced homemakers to become women's crisis "para-professional" counselors in a formal salaried capacity. The program will include "on the job" training in human service agencies that themselves deal with women's problems centering around health, family, and personal women's crises. Our program will give the new students a working knowledge of the welfare system, sociology, psychology, human development and skills for communicating with clients in crisis.

More specifically, the program will consist of a combination of 57 academic credits (i.e., 19 courses), 6 of which will be taken under specific options chosen by the student, and an additional 6 credits of field work centering around this option. An example of the general curriculum is attached (see Appendix A). Alternative curricula for the various options (e.g. Aging, Loss and Separation, Abuse) are presently being designed. An orientation program will precede the starting of coursework (see Appendix B). Physical facilities and support systems are in place so that funding is necessary only for new course development and for the administration and implementation of the new Women's Crisis Counseling program at the Ogontz Campus.

In order to evaluate the usefulness of such a program, we are presently conducting an assessment of displaced homemaker's centers and human service agencies. We have sent questionnaires (see Appendices C and D) to agency administrators to determine the

appropriateness of our program for their clientele and whether such agencies would be able to utilize the program's graduates.

It is assumed that such a program will help non-traditional students develop intellectual perspective for understanding the factors influencing their own lives and give them power to define and interpret their own crises. Professionalization of these women as "Women's Crisis Counselors" is important in so far as most of this kind of work is being performed by women non-professionals in non-paying volunteer positions with all the problems attached to such services. Ironically when these jobs are fee-related they are usually performed by male psychiatrists, physicians and clinicians who are difficult to afford and who, more often than not, cannot adequately relate to the meaning systems and life experiences of women clients, and/or relate to them paternalistically.

We recognize the severe plight of women who have been called "displaced." We recognize the unique aspects of the feminine experience that make women likely to be the best counselors of other women. Thus we plan to provide a means for our students to increase their economic power, status, and self-esteem via the counseling of female clients who will themselves be well served by such caring and knowledgeable paraprofessionals.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A. Associate Degree in Community Services Emphasis in Women's Crisis Counseling

I. General Education Requirements (21 credits)

A. Communication skills 9 cr.
ENGL. 10, 20; SPCOM 200

B. Biological and physical sciences 6 cr.
(Will petition to have student take 2 biological sciences)
BI SC 4, BIOL 341

C. Arts and Humanities 3 cr.
HUMAN 101

D. Social and Behavioral sciences 3 cr.
PSYCH 2

II. Requirements for the Major (42 credits)

SOC 5 (Social Problems)
SOC 22 (Intro. to Social Welfare)
SOC 309 (Sociology of Health)
I F S 129 (Intro. to Individual and Family Development)
I F S 349 (Adult Development and Aging)
PSYCH 37 (Mental Health)
PSYCH 170 (Psychology of Women)
L A 200 (Women Studies)
I F S 297 (Special Topics, e.g. Adult Life Crises: Issues and Treatment)
I F S 411 (The Helping Relationship)
SOC 321 or H DEV 321 (Field Projects) - 3 cr.
STAT 200 or 4 more credits in field work
6 credits taken under option chosen by student (e.g. Aging, Loss and Separation, Abuse)

APPENDIX B. Orientation Program

I. Assess and remediate Basic Skills

II. Orient students to college

III. Orient students to Ogontz Campus

IV. Orient students to particulars of Associate degree program

V. Run various workshops focusing on group processes

APPENDIX C: Questionnaire sent to Displaced Homemaker's Centers

1. Name and Address of Agency:

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. Name of Respondent: _____

3. Job Title of Respondent: _____

4. Do you see a need and potential job market for graduates of our program?

5. Would you refer clients to our program?

6. Do you think such a program should be offered: _____part-time (evenings

   _____ part-time (day) _____ full-time (day) _____ both P-T (day) and P-T (evening)

7. Would your clients be able to afford tuition for such a program?

8. Can you suggest some possible sources of funding for tuition support?

9. Do you know of any comparable academic program in the area? If so, please identify and describe.

10. In the future, who should we be contacting at your agency?

    Name _____

    Phone number _____

APPENDIX D: Questionnaire sent to Human Service Agencies

1. Name and Address of Agency:

_____

_____

2. Name of Respondent: _____

3. Job Title of Respondent: _____

4. Do you see a need for paraprofessionals trained as women's crisis counselors?

5. Do you see job possibilities in your agency for our graduates?

6. In what capacity? What salary range?

7. Are there women employed in your agency at the present time who might benefit from this program?

8. We have so far considered the following options for students to specialize in: abuse, loss and separation, and aging. What other options would you suggest?

9. In light of your client's needs, can you suggest some specific skills that we should incorporate into our program's objectives?

10. Would you be able to provide a field placement experience in your agency for our students?

11. In what capacity? What salary range?

12. In the future, who should we be contacting at your agency?

Name _____

Phone number _____